

Legislative Issue Brief – Pandemic Flu Funding and Surveillance



Catawba County Board of Commissioner's Legislative Goal

Support increased local funding, incentives and community-based surveillance and communication systems regarding disease spread related to a pandemic flu threat

Background

Preparing for a pandemic (global outbreak) influenza outbreak involves everybody. The threat of pandemic influenza is real, and there needs to be a strong local preparedness system in place.

Influenza is a highly contagious respiratory virus that is responsible for annual illness in the United States and other countries. Each year, 200,000 people on average are hospitalized and 36,000 die in the United States from influenza infection or a secondary complication.

During an influenza pandemic, the level of morbidity and mortality from influenza will likely increase dramatically. During the last century, three influenza pandemics caused increased mortality, morbidity and societal burden throughout the world above the levels seen with usual yearly epidemics.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other public health experts agree that it is not a question of **IF** a pandemic will occur, but **WHEN** it will occur. If the United States is not adequately prepared, pandemic flu could seriously affect everyone economically. Specifically, Federal assistance is needed in these areas:

- Keep Pandemic Planning and Preparedness Funding, especially to local governments, where response is going to be needed most at the beginning of a pandemic outbreak.
- Additional funding is needed to support the increased demand of exercises and planning efforts at the local level.
- Incentives are needed for local governments, businesses, schools and medical centers who aid their staff (prepared workforce) and community (e.g. personal preparedness) toward achieving a higher level of preparedness (e.g. education, family emergency plan, family preparedness kits).
- Support for community based surveillance and communications systems for tracking of disease spread, real-time communication and notification abilities with community partners (school systems, businesses, hospitals, etc).

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